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There Are Still Plenty of Bugs in Silicon Valley Security

By ROBERT LINDSEY

SAN JOSE, Calif. — It is a case laden with the elements of espionage fiction: stolen documents, secret agents, clandestine meetings in Vienna and Geneva, a safehouse in Warsaw, a spy called "The Minister," a mysterious American businessman code-named "The Big Man."

When the Federal Bureau of Investigation announced last week that it had arrested James Durward Harper Jr., a freelance computer engineer, and accused him of selling data about the Minuteman missile to Polish intelligence agents, it was the latest demonstration of how porous America's high technology industries have become.

In 1977, Christopher John Boyce and Andrew Daulton Lee, childhood friends from an affluent Southern California suburb, admitted selling secrets about American spy satellites, obtained from a defense plant where Mr. Boyce worked, to Soviet agents over a period of almost two years. In 1981, William Bell, an engineer for Hughes Aircraft Corporation in Southern California, admitted selling data about United States tactical missiles to a Polish agent.

But for each case that was detected, security experts say, there have probably been many more that were not. Except for a few major world capitals, there is probably no busier forum for technological espionage these days than here in California's "Silicon Valley," named after the silicon wafers used to make the miniaturized electronic circuits that drive modern computers and weapon systems.

With more than 900 advanced technology companies situated along a 25-mile corridor from San Jose to Palo Alto, the community has become an international bazaar of high-tech ideas and hardware. Last year, two Japanese companies were charged by the Justice Department with trying to steal advanced computer designs from IBM Corporation. But old-timers in the Valley say this incident was just a more heavily publicized example of what goes on every day.

Can the illicit commerce in ideas and hardware, especially those of military importance, be stopped? The Reagan Administration, through more rigorous enforcement of export laws and new investigative initiatives, has sought during the past two years to close the door, and it claims to be making progress. But most people involved in these efforts concede that, because of Ameri-

ca's open society, the need for legitimate international transfer of technology, and the greed of some Americans, the door is still open.

Indeed, many security officials and industry leaders say they are dubious about ever closing the door completely. And, they say, given human nature, it's probably unlikely that this country will end completely its loss of technology to spies. At the same time, there are many people who claim that the present system for guarding secrets is far from adequate. Mr. Boyce, for example, told of taking top secret documents hidden in potted plants past security guards.

F.B.I. agents allege that Mr. Harper obtained many of the documents they claim he sold to Polish agents from his now deceased wife, Louise, a security executive who had a "Secret" clearance at a company called Systems Control Inc. Housed in a modern, ivy-covered building, it is a place that looks as harmless as hundreds of other buildings in Silicon Valley even though men and women conducted research there on the Minuteman missile and other weapons of mass destruction.

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